

Headstone reunited with soldier's grave

By BONNIE CHRISTIAN

A 19-year-old soldier who was buried at Karrakatta Cemetery in 1916 had his headstone placed on the wrong grave.

The mistake was discovered by Shenton Park man Quentin Hall in February but corrected in time for Anzac Day.

Mr Hall was cross-referencing graves with maps as he searched for his own relative and found that two headstones were not in the right spot.

He told the POST he had found at least a dozen mismatched graves while researching his family history.

He said the boundaries and numbering of sections in the cemetery were irregular and it would be easy for a stonemason to misunderstand from the maps where a person was buried.

Mr Hall found that Private Francis Clarke's headstone did not mark the correct grave.

He reported it to the Office of Australian War Graves who confirmed the error and last week re-erected the headstone over the right plot.

Pte Clarke is buried in the same plot as his mother, Annie Clarke.

His commemoration was reinstated as part of War Graves' broader national reinstatement of bronze plaques between the 1970s and 1990s.

"A deep gloom was spread over the Blackboy camp on Monday morning when it became known that Pte Fred Clarke had succumbed to an attack of peritonitis at the No.8 A.G.H, Fremantle," the Camp Chronicle reported on July 6, 1916.

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Shenton Park man Quentin Hall places flowers on Private Francis Clarke's newly-erected commemoration at Karrakatta cemetery.

Poppies on Anzac Day

Millie Nolan, of Mosman Park, is 11 years old and is head girl at Mosman Park Primary School. She wrote this poem to commemorate the Fallen:



A child peered in at a market stall and called to his mother:

"Why are they selling only poppies, why is there nothing other?"

"Today is Anzac Day, and poppies are for those who went away."

"But why have red flowers, why not blue, green or pink?"

His mother smiled sadly and said:

"Well I think

"Red's for the blood that drenched the ground, and for the bodies of soldiers that never were found.

"Red is the colour of the nursing post, where women cared for soldiers the most."

"Mother, what story does the black centre hold? I mean, why is it not

green or gold?"

"Black is for the families that cried over the men and women who died,

"Those who served Australia with courage and pride.

"And even when the war was done, every person was missing something or someone."

"Mother, the war was long ago, so why you are crying I do not know."

"I am crying for those who lost their lives, and for their children, husbands or wives.

"I cry for the animals that sadly died, and for the people still crying inside.

"I'm weeping because you did not know about the poppies that will forever grow."

Western suburb Anzac services

Scotch College will host a public Dawn Service at its Claremont playing fields this Anzac Day, ahead of other local commemorations later in the morning.

Locals wishing to pay their respects are asked to arrive at the Gooch Pavilion in Garden Street at 5.30am for a 6am service start.

The service will be held on the Memorial Ground, which was named to commemorate the 72 former students and staff who were killed in World War I. Local RSL sub-branches will hold services in conjunction with councils.

Cambridge: 7.50am at West

Leederville Memorial Gardens and Cenotaph. Cambridge Street will be closed between Abbotsford and Kerr streets from 7.30am.

Claremont: 7.30am at Claremont Park, followed by a free barbecue breakfast hosted by Claremont Nedlands Lions Club.

Cottesloe: 6.45am at Cottesloe Civic Centre, followed by a simple breakfast.

Mosman Park: 9.45am at Memorial Park, corner of Bay View Terrace and Memorial Drive.

North Fremantle: 9am at the North Fremantle War Memorial, corner Queen Victoria Street

and Harvest Road.

Perth: The Dawn Service at the State War Memorial in Kings Park begins at 5.45am. A Gunfire Breakfast will be held in the Government House gardens at 7am, followed by a march on St Georges Terrace at 9am.

Subiaco: 7.50am at Subiaco Post Office, Rokeby Road. A procession will move to the Fallen Soldiers Memorial at 8am. A service at the memorial will commence at 8.15.

Shenton Park: 6.50am at corner of King Street and Onslow Road. A procession will move to the Shenton Park Community Centre at 7am.

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Pte Clarke had worked there for seven months as a typist and telephone attendant.

“By his kindly disposition, his readiness to help, and his never-failing urbanity he had endeared himself not only to those with who he was brought into close contact, but to all camp,” the article said.

“He stuck to his work, like the Briton he was to the last, and despite the fact that he was not at all well for days and the urging of his fellows he refused to give in.

“Freddy may not have gone to the front, but he died as a soldier should – at his post, and no one more than Pte Fred Clarke ‘did his bit’.”

The Metropolitan Cemeteries

Board said inspection of monuments was a standard and established part of the board's installation process.

“Due to the age of (Pte Clarke's) installation, available records do not provide detail of any inspection in this instance; however, the inspection requirement remains a core element of MCB's processes,” a spokesperson said.

“The MCB is not aware of any other instances in which official war grave commemorations have been incorrectly placed.

“The MCB maintains detailed burial and plot records for all interments, and families are encouraged to contact cemetery staff for assistance in locating graves or confirming

plot details.

“Any approved monument installation is subject to established processes and inspections, and the Board responds promptly when concerns are raised.”

The Department of Veterans' Affairs said it was regrettable Pte Clarke's headstone was placed in the incorrect spot.

“Due to the age of the installation, it is difficult to confirm the reason for this error,” they said.

“The Office of Australian War Graves is conducting a comprehensive audit of commemorations at Karrakatta Cemetery to proactively identify and address any further anomalies.

“To date, no other anomalies have been identified.”